



## History of American Thought, 1859-Present (HIS 302) Spring 2011



W.E.B. DuBois

Susan Sontag

Prof. Ratner-Rosenhagen  
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Office Hours: M 1:00-2:00; 4:00-5:00  
Credits: 4  
Course Schedule: MF, 2:30-3:45

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Teaching Assistant: Brad Baranowski  
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BB's Office: Humanities 4260  
BB's Office Hours: M & F, 12:00-1:00

This course is designed for undergraduates interested in the role of ideas and culture in modern American history. We will examine developments in philosophy, science, political theory, social criticism, and the arts in American life from 1859 to the present. We will read the works of a number of influential thinkers and writers, as well as explore a variety of intellectual movements, which shaped the cultural worlds of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Americans. Some of the themes we will examine include: the influence of Darwinism on religion; the impact of industrialization on ideas about American society; the turn-of-the-century revolt against formalism in philosophy, literature, and the social sciences; early twentieth-century conceptions of race, ethnicity, and gender; the responsibility of the intellectual in times of national and global crisis; post-WWII liberalism and existentialism; the rise of postmodernism in the academy and American popular culture, and the persistent contestations over the meaning and scope of American national identity.

Our course will take a dynamic approach to the study of American thought. We will examine ideas, as well as the modes of their production, dissemination, and appropriation. We will place our readings in their intellectual, cultural, and political contexts in an effort to understand the relationship between ideas and social conditions.

The texts selected cover a wide range of voices from our past. The authors will not be treated as constituting a singular American tradition, but rather, as participants in ongoing conversations about important issues in American life. As a single reading list cannot do justice to the richness of this history, I welcome and encourage you to incorporate other thinkers, ideas, traditions, and concepts into our class discussions.

### **Course Structure and Assignments**

This course will meet three times a week. On Mondays and Fridays, class meetings will be devoted to lectures, which will lay out the major themes of the time period under examination, and/or some discussion and primary-source exercises. In addition, you will have weekly discussion sections led by Brad Baranowski, which will focus on your primary source assignments.

As class participation is a significant portion of your final grade, it is expected that you attend every discussion section, and that you come prepared to thoughtfully discuss the assigned readings. **You are expected to bring your readings to every discussion section.** There will be **pop-quizzes** in your discussion sections. The format of the quizzes will vary: you can expect some with true/false and multiple choice questions, and some short answer and essay questions. The lowest 2 quiz grades will be dropped. In order to successfully contribute to the class discussions and to do well on the quizzes and exams, it is essential that you not only do all of the reading before class, but that you come having reflected upon what you have read. There will be absolutely no make-up quizzes.

There will be two in-class exams, one 5-page essay, and a take-home final exam.

Discussion Sections:

Section #	Day & Time	Location
301	T 2:25 p.m.	2625 HUM
302	T 3:30 p.m.	2619 HUM
303	R 2:25 p.m.	4013 VILAS
304	R 3:30 p.m.	2631 HUM

Discussion sections have a cap because they are designed to be small enough to foster effective participation. Therefore, it is essential that students attend the section for which they are registered. If, however, on occasion you must attend a different discussion section, please consult Brad first.

1. Class Participation (attendance, informed contribution to class discussions, and pop-quizzes) **25%**
2. Exam 1 **15%**
3. Essay **15%**
4. Exam 2 **20%**
5. Final Exam **25%**

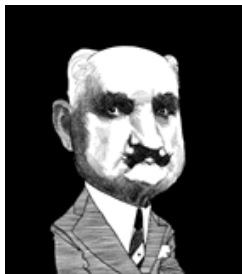
Please contact me or Brad for the procedure how to appeal an exam or paper grade.

Students with Disabilities: Please notify me early in the semester if you have a documented requirement for accommodation in this course. If you have any questions about this or require any assistance, feel free to contact me or the McBurney Disability Resource Center at 263-2741.

**Readings**

All of the readings (except the two books) are found in our course packet and are on Reserve. The course packet is available for purchase at the Humanities Copy Center (Hum. Rm. 1650).

We will also be reading two books, both of which are available for purchase at the University bookstore:



George Santayana

Barry Werth, *Banquet at Delmonico's: Great Minds, the Gilded Age, and the Triumph of Evolution in America* (2009)

Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (2010)

All readings (books & course packets) are also available on 3-hour reserve at the College Library.

**Course Outline:**

**Week 1: Course Introduction**

(Jan. 21) Introduction

**Week 2: Thought and Culture in the Gilded Age**

(Jan. 24) Darwinism in America

(Jan. 28) The Contest of Moral Authority in Victorian America

Reading for Discussion: Barry Werth, *Banquet at Delmonico's: Great Minds, the Gilded Age, and the Triumph of Evolution in America* (2009): Introduction, Principal Characters, Prologue, and Chpts. 1-6

**Week 3: Victorian Culture and the Genteel Sensibility**

(Jan. 31) Victorian Culture and its Critics

(Feb. 4) In-Class Exercise: American "Chromo-Civilization"

Reading for Discussion: Werth, *Banquet at Delmonico's*: Chpts. 7-12, and Epilogue



William James

**Week 4: Modern Truth**

(Feb. 7) Pragmatism and the Transformation of Modern Philosophy

(Feb. 11) Meaning and the Moral Life without Foundations

Reading for Discussion: William James, "Will to Believe" (1897), "What Makes a Life Significant" (1899), "What Pragmatism Means" (1907)

**Week 5: Progressivism, Pluralism, and Modern Democracy**

(Feb. 14) Progressivism and the Quest for Self and Community

(Feb. 18) Conceptualizing Freedom and Belonging in Progressive-Era America

Reading for Discussion: Jane Addams, “The Subjective Necessity of Social Settlements” (1892); W.E.B. DuBois, selection from *Souls of Black Folk* (1903); Randolph Bourne, “Youth” (1912), “The Experimental Life” (1913), “This Older Generation” (1915), “Trans-National America” (1916)



Randolph Bourne

### **Week 6: Intellectuals and the Question of Loyalty During World War I**

(Feb. 21) Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism

(Feb. 25) Pragmatism and Power Through the Lens of War

Reading for Discussion: Emma Goldman, “Patriotism: A Menace to Liberty” (1917) at: <http://sunsite3.berkeley.edu/Goldman/Writings/Anarchism/patriotism.html>; Randolph Bourne, “Twilight of Idols” (1917); John Dewey, “Conscription of Thought” (1917), “What America Will Fight For” (1917), “Conscience and Compulsion” (1917), and “The Future of Pacifism” (1918)

### **Week 7: Exam I and New Intellectual Trends in Post-WWI America**

(Feb. 28) **Exam I**

(Mar. 4) No Class

No Discussion Section this Week. Start reading, Joseph Wood Krutch, selections from *The Modern Temper: A Study and a Confession* (1929); and Ernest Hemingway, “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” (1926)

### **Week 8: Roots and Rootlessness in 1920s Thought and Culture**

(Mar. 7) Modernity and its Discontents

(Mar. 11) In-Class Exercise: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance & Lost Generation



Zora Neale Hurston

Reading for Discussion: H.L. Mencken, “Puritanism as a Literary Force” (1917); Alain Locke, “The New Negro” (1925); Joseph Wood Krutch, selections from *The Modern Temper: A Study and a Confession* (1929)

### **Week 9: No Class (Spring Break)**

### **Week 10: Interwar Debates: The “American Way,” Western Civilization, and the Judeo-Christian Tradition**

(Mar. 21) Social Sciences as Cultural Critique

(Mar. 25) Higher Education in a Democracy

***Essays Due at the beginning of class Friday, March 25<sup>th</sup>***

Reading for Discussion: Margaret Mead, selections from “Coming of Age in Samoa” (1929); John Dewey, “Democracy and Human Nature” (1943); Robert Maynard Hutchins, “Education at War” (1939)

### **Week 11: World War II: European Totalitarianism and American Democracy**

(Mar. 28) Theorizing Totalitarianism

(Apr. 1) Film: “Exiles”

Reading for Discussion: Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, “Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” (1944); and Hannah Arendt, selection from *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951); and W.E.B. DuBois, “The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto” (1952)

### **Week 12: Exam II & The Reorientation of American Thought During and after WWII**

(Apr. 4) Democratic Vistas of the 1940s

(Apr. 8) **Exam II**

Reading for Discussion: Henry R. Luce, “The American Century” (1941); and Henry Wallace, selection from *Century of the Common Man* (1943)



Mortimer Adler



Lionel Trilling

### **Week 13: Postwar Liberalism: Left, Right, and “Vital Center”**

(Apr. 11) The Making of Postwar Liberalism

(Apr. 15) In-Class Exercise: Postwar Conservatism and the Founding of the *National Review* (1955)

Reading for Discussion: Reinhold Niebuhr, selection from *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (1944); Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. selections from *The Vital Center* (1949); Lionel Trilling, “Preface” from *Liberal Tradition* (1950); and Russell Kirk, selection from *The Conservative Mind* (1953)



Joseph Campbell

### **Week 14: The Politics of Authenticity and the Spiritual Marketplace**

(Apr. 18) Quests for “Authenticity”: From Philosophy to Political Protest

(Apr. 22) No Class—Passover/Good Friday

Reading for Discussion: Joseph Campbell, selections from *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949); and Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (2010), Prologue and Ch. 1

### **Week 15: The End of Universalism**

(Apr. 25) Postmodernism Defined

(Apr. 29) Science, Political Theory, and Moral Inquiry after the Postmodern Turn

Reading for Discussion: Thomas Kuhn, selection from *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962); Richard Rorty, “Science as Solidarity” (1986); Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*, Ch. 3



Thomas Kuhn

**Week 16: The End of Universalism, Continued...**

(May 2) Identity Politics and the Culture Wars

(May 6) Human Rights in the Age of Interpretation

Reading for Discussion: Judith Butler, from *Gender Trouble* (1990); Kwame Anthony Appiah, from *In My Father's House* (1992); Wayne Booth, "Individualism and the Mystery of the Social Self; or, Does Amnesty Have a Leg to Stand On?" (1992); Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*, Ch. 4 or 5, Ch. 6, and Epilogue



Kwame Anthony Appiah

Final Exams due in Brad's office no later than Tuesday, May 10<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m.